The Song of the Cid

A DUAL-LANGUAGE EDITION WITH PARALLEL TEXT

Translated by
BURTON RAFFEL

Introduction and Notes by
MARÍA ROSA MENOCAL

PENGUIN BOOKS

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THE SONG OF THE CID

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[The beginning of the poem is lost. Historical documents show that the King of Castile had turned against the Cid and given him nine days to leave.]

1

Tears were flowing from his eyes, then flowing faster
As he turned and looked back, just standing.
He saw the doors, swung open, padlocks gone,
Wall pegs empty, no furs, no gowns
Or cloaks, no falcons or molting hawks.
My Cid sighed, his burdens weighing him down.
My Cid spoke, in measured, well-controlled tones:
"I thank you, my Father, my Lord on high!
This is the vulture trap my evil enemies sent me."

2

They spurred the horses, let the reins hang low.
To their right, leaving Vivar, they saw a hooded crow,
But as they reached Burgos it flew to their left.
My Cid shrugged his shoulders and shook his head:
"Let it be a good sign, Alvar Fáñez, for now we're exiles!"

3

My Cid, Ruy Díaz, rode into Burgos.
His sixty men carried spears, hung with banners.
Men and women came out, when they appeared;
Merchants and their wives leaned from their windows, staring,

Weeping, overcome with sorrow.
And from their lips, all of them, fell the same prayer:
"O God, what a wonderful servant, if only he had a decent master!"

4

They would have been glad to ask him in, but no one dared;
Don Alfonso, the king, was far too angry.
He'd sent the city a notice, received the night before,
Sealed in dramatic passion, and urgent:
My Cid, Ruy Díaz, was to be turned away,
Given nothing. Whoever dared to disobey
Would lose whatever they owned, their eyes would be torn from their heads,
And their bodies and souls would be lost forever.
Every Christian in Burgos was bent in fear
And sorrow, hiding from my Cid, too terrified to speak.
The Warrior rode to the Burgos house where he'd always gone;
He stood at the door, solid and bolted shut
By the people inside, for fear of King Alfonso.
Unless he broke it down, nothing would force it open.
My Cid called to them, his voice raised high,
But no one inside would reply.
My Cid rode up to the door,
Slipped his foot from the stirrup, and kicked at the place.
But no one opened what was closed tight in his face.
Then a little girl appeared, nine years old:
"It's done, Warrior, you who have worn your sword so proudly!
The king has forbidden it, his order came last night—
Strict and fierce, harsh and sealed all over, tight.
We don't dare help you, we can't do a thing,
And if we did, we'd lose our houses and everything—
And what's still worse, the eyes in our heads!
My Cid, you'd win nothing from our misery, our death,
But may the Creator protect you with his heavenly blessing."
The little girl said this, then went back in her house.

My Cid knew the king was burning inside.
He turned away from the door, galloped through Burgos,
Straight to Saint Mary's cathedral, where he dropped from his horse,
Fell on his knees, and prayed from his heart.
The moment his prayer was finished, he departed;
Galloping through city gates he crossed the great river, the Arlanzón.
Not far from Burgos, sand all around,
He stopped, ordered tents put up, and then dismounted.
My Cid, Ruy Díaz, who had worn his sword with pride,
Was lodged, near this city now closed to him, in a barren sand pile,
But with good company all around him.
My Cid, camped as if in a mountain wilderness,
Forbidden to buy food of any kind, in Burgos,
Nothing at all, and the people behind their doors
Barred from selling him half a penny's worth.

5

Martín Antolínez, that deft citizen,
Brought bread and wine for my Cid and his men—
Things he did not buy, he already had them—
So they had plenty, whatever they wanted.
Warrior Cid, mighty Conqueror, was glad,
And so were all who'd come with him.
Martín Antolínez spoke: listen to what he said!
"O, mighty Cid, born at a lucky hour!
Stay here tonight, and we'll leave in the morning—
Because, for sure, I'll be accused of doing what I've done,
And King Alfonso's anger will hunt me down.
If I run off with you, and stay in one piece,
Sooner or later the king will want to be friendly—
And if not, whatever I leave is dust on the ground."

Don Martíno thanked them, taking the money,
And anxious to get away, said his goodbyes.
He galloped out of Burgos, across the Arlanzón,
And straight to the tent of the Warrior, born to good fortune.
My Cid embraced him, hugging him hard:
"You've come, Martín Antolínez, my loyal follower!
O, I wait for the day when I can reward you!"
"Yes, I'm here, Warrior—and I've finished it all.
There's six hundred marks for you, and thirty for me.
Let's pack up the tents and leave in a hurry:
Let's be in San Pedro de Cardeña when the cock starts crowing,
And we'll see your wife, wellborn and wise.
We'll stay a little while, then leave the country.
We've got to hurry, the king gave you nine days to leave."

12

The tents came down as soon as he spoke these words,
My Cid and his people went galloping away;
He turned his horse's nose toward Saint Mary's church,
His right hand making a cross on his forehead:
"I thank you, God, guardian of heaven and earth!
O help me with your power, blessèd mother Mary!
I've angered the king, and I'm leaving Castile—
Perhaps forever, for the rest of my life.
O holy Mother, protect me as I leave,
Help me every day, lift me every night!
Do this, and if my fortune continues bright
Splendid gifts will come to your altar,
A thousand masses will be sung in your honor!"

13

The Warrior left, his heart steady;
They loosened the reins, gave the horses their head.
Then Martín Antolínez said:

"I'll see my wife, my only comfort,
Advise her what to do, now that I'm gone.
Let the king take what he wants to, I don't mind.
I'll be with you, tomorrow, before the sun shines high."

14

Martín Antolínez turned back toward Burgos,
My Cid rode to San Pedro of Cardeña, as fast as possible,
Riding with his loyal men.
  Cocks had begun crowing, the sun was trying to rise again,
When the Warrior reached San Pedro.
Don Sancho, the abbot, a man of true Christian faith,
Was saying morning prayers as dawn rolled through the gray
Mists. Doña Jimena, Cid's wife, was there,
With five of her ladies, praying to Saint Peter and God:
"You who guide and rule us all, defend my Cid."

15

My Cid knocked at the door, his presence was reported.
Lord, how Don Sancho, the abbot, was rejoicing!
They brightened the courtyard with lamps and candles,
Welcoming the Warrior, born a lucky man.
"God be thanked, my Cid," said Don Sancho,
"That I see you here. Please accept my hospitality."
He who was born at the right time replied:
"Thank you, dear abbot, I appreciate your generosity.
Could you have food prepared for me and my men?
I've been exiled from this land, but let me give you fifty
Marks—and double that, if I live on.
There must be no loss to this monastery, on my account,
So I give you a hundred marks for Doña Jimena:
Let her, with her daughters and her ladies, be cared for here,
  for a year.

Fold your arms around my two little girls:
I entrust them to you, Don Sancho,
I leave them all in your hands.
If more money is needed, for you or them,
Spend whatever you need to:
I promise you four for every mark you spend."
The abbot cheerfully agreed.
Now see Doña Jimena and her daughters approaching,
Each little girl in a nurse's arms.
Doña Jimena dropped to her knees, in front of the Warrior.
Tears flowing, she kissed his hands:
"I call to your grace, O Cid, you who were born for grandeur!
You've been driven out of Castile by malicious informers.

16

"Grant me a favor—you, who wear so flowing a beard!
Behold, in front of you, myself and your daughters,
Both still tiny, their lives an infancy,
And also my women, who go with me.
I see you have come in a hurry, and you'll go, and too soon,
We'll have to live alone.
For the love of our Mother Mary, tell me what to do!"
He stretched out his hands, his heart as soft as his beard;
He picked up the little girls, and held them
Close to his breast, held them and loved them,
Weeping. He sighed from deep in his heart:
"O Doña Jimena, my wonderful wife,
I love you so much, and I always have.
You see I have to leave you, O soul of my life—
I go, and you must stay behind.
May it please God, and his mother Mary,
That some day these hands will give them in marriage—
And let fortune favor me, adding some days to my life,
To serve you, O you, my much-honored wife!"

17

A glorious farewell feast was given the Warrior.
The bells of San Pedro clanged a great clamor,
Sending a message all over Castile, calling:
"He's leaving our land, my Cid, the Warrior, the great one.
Come join him!" Some left their houses, some left great estates.
That very day, on the Arlanzón bridge,
A hundred and fifteen knights crossed all together,
All of them looking for my Cid, the Warrior:
Martín Antolínez took charge
And brought them to San Pedro, to the man born at the right hour.

18

When my Cid heard new men were coming,
His forces suddenly growing,
He quickly mounted, rode out to greet them,
His face remembering how to smile again.
Each one of them reached for his hand, and kissed it.
  And my Cid said, speaking with passion:
"May God, our Father in heaven, ensure
That those who have left their homes and come to me
Will be rewarded at my hands, before I die,
Double whatever their loss may be!"
My Cid was happy to have more mouths to feed.
Everyone fully agreed.
  Six days of his reprieve already gone,
Three remained, and then there were none.
The king's men were there, waiting, watching:
When all nine days had passed, they could catch him,
And nothing would save him, neither silver nor gold.
That day went by, and then it was dark,
And my Cid assembled them all:
"Listen, you noble knights: there's nothing to worry about.
I have no riches with me, but I'll share what I have all around.

Be wise, and do what must be done:
In the morning, when crowing cocks have begun,
Quickly saddle up your horses.
Don Sancho will ring the bells for morning prayers
And sing us the mass of the Holy Trinity.
And when that mass has been sung
We'll leave, with a long ride still to come."
So it was settled; when morning came, it was done:
As the cocks crowed their second call
They were saddled and ready, one and all.
  At that moment, the matin bells resounded;
My Cid and his wife entered the church.
Doña Jimena knelt at the steps in front of the altar,
Praying every bit as hard
As she could for God to keep my Cid from harm:
"O glorious Father, high in heaven,
Who raised the sky and made the world, and the next day the sea,
Who made the stars and the moon, and the sun to warm us,
You who were incarnated in our Mother, Saint Mary,
Who, as you chose to, appeared in Bethlehem,
Glorified by shepherds, who sang your praise,
And three great Arab kings who came,
Melchior, and Gaspar, and Balthasar,
Offering gold, and fragrant myrrh, and frankincense,
Which also was your wish.
You who saved Jonah, who fell in the sea,
You who protected Daniel in the den of lions,
And saved Saint Susannah from lecherous liars,
You who saved Saint Sebastian, in harsh old Rome—
For thirty-two years you walked and roamed
The earth, performing wonders we must remember:
The water you turned to wine, the bread you made of stones,
And Lazarus you raised from the grave, returned from the dead;
Allowing Jews to take you high on Calvary
And, at Golgotha, putting you on the cross,
Along with two thieves, on either side of you,
One of whom came to heaven, the other did not.
And even on the cross you worked your miracles:

Blind Longinus, who had no sight at all,
Pierced your side with his spear, your blood poured out,
And running down the shaft, anointed his hands:
He raised his bloodstained fingers to his face
And, opening his eyes, could see, and saw wherever he looked,
And then and there believed in you, and so was saved forever.
You rose from your grave, you willingly descended to hell,
Smashed its gates, and carried off our holy fathers.
You are King of all kings, Father of the whole world,
In whom I wholly believe, and whom I adore,
So may Saint Peter help me as I beg of you, O Lord,
To keep my Cid, this Warrior, free of harm.
We separate, today, but I beg you to bring us together once more."
  Her prayer was over, the mass was sung;
They left the church, ready, now, to ride.
My Cid went to Doña Jimena, and put his arms around her,
As she kissed his hands
And wept the tears she could not hold back.
The Warrior turned, looking at his daughters:
  "I leave you in the hands of our Lord, our holy Father.
Only God knows when we'll meet again."
  You'll never see such a flood of tears as he shed,
Their parting was like fingernails pulled from the flesh.
  He and his men prepared to ride,
But my Cid kept looking eagerly back,
Until Minaya Alvar Fáñez gave him this wise advice:
"Cid, where has your courage gone? You were born to your
  mother
In good fortune! What a waste of time! We need to ride.
All our sorrows can still be turned to delight;
The God who gave us souls can also give advice."
  Abbot Don Sancho was admonished, again,
To care for Doña Jimena and her daughters
And all her ladies as well.
The abbot knew he'd be richly rewarded.
As the priest was leaving, Alvar Fáñez said:
"Abbot, if more men come looking for us,
Tell them to follow our hoofprints, and hurry:

54

They made their return, smiling
From ear to ear, all happy with what they'd gotten;
My Cid was delighted; so too was Alvar Fáñez.
My Cid could not restrain his pleasure.
"And yet," he told his men, "I warn you: leisure
Is not for us. We're lost if we stay in one place.
Tomorrow morning we must leave this camp
And keep on riding, first here, then there."
He took them through Gallocanta Pass,
Which took them ten long days to cross,
Then on to Huesa and Montalbán, raiding
For ten more treasure-laden days.
The news of these devastating
Forays spread far and wide:
Castile's great exile had become a serious danger.

55

News that my Cid, Ruy Díaz, was ravaging far and wide
Came to the Count of Barcelona,
Who was deeply upset at such an attack on his pride.

56

The count was boastful, stuffed with conceit, and reckless:
"This Cid from Vivar is causing me trouble, he thinks I'm helpless.
Right here in my court he wounded one of my nephews,
And never apologized.
Now he's raiding lands lying in my protection.
I've never challenged him, or picked a quarrel—
But when he comes looking for me, I'll make him pay."
He quickly assembled a massive army,

Moors and Christians gathered at his call
And followed the tracks of that good man from Vivar, my Cid,
And found him, in the pine woods of Tévar.
The count was sure his massive army would capture my Cid,
Who was coming down from the mountains,
Loaded with treasure he'd taken.
The count's messenger arrived,
My Cid listened, and quickly replied:
"Tell the count I have no quarrel with him;
I've taken nothing of his. He should let me continue in peace."
The count responded: "He's lying!
I'll make him pay for what he's done and is doing!
This exile will learn just who he's dishonored!"
The messenger ran back as fast as he could,
And then my Cid, he who came from Vivar, understood
That unless he fought this battle, he could not go on.

57

"All right, my knights, lay down your treasure:
First things first! Get ready to fight:
Count Ramón is about to attack us
With a great army of Moors and Christians.
If we try to escape, he'll stop us.
As long as they're advancing, let them come.
Tighten your saddle buckles, put on your armor:
They're riding downhill, not wearing boots or shoes;
Their saddles are light, and loose, and ours are heavy, and we've got boots.
Our hundred knights have to beat these hordes!
Before they reach the plain, we'll attack with lances—
Every thrust will empty three saddles.
Hah! Count Ramón will see just who he's met,
Here in these woods, trying to steal our treasure!"

58

When he stopped talking, they all were ready,
Armor on, seated on their horses.
They saw the count's Catalonian forces
Hurrying down the slopes, approaching
The plain. And then my Cid, born in a lucky hour,
Ordered his men to attack.
They'd been eagerly waiting, and gladly
Galloped into battle, making good use of their lances,
Striking some, tumbling others to the ground.
And just like that, it was over; he who'd been born
At a lucky hour had won the battle, and Count Ramón was his prisoner.

59

He'd also won Colada, a sword worth more than a thousand
Silver marks; the battle brought him still more in honor.
He took his noble captive to his tent
And left him there, under good guard.
And then my Cid strolled out,
And his men swarmed all around him,
Everyone happy at how much this victory had brought them.
My Cid had a huge banquet prepared for the count,
But Count Ramón did not give a damn,
Pushing away all the food brought in for him:
He would not eat, rejecting every dish.
"I won't put a thing in my mouth, not for all the gold in Spain.
Now that I've been beaten in battle by a band of nobodies,
I'd just as soon give up body and soul together."

60

Here's what my Cid, Ruy Díaz, told him:
"Eat, Count, eat this bread and drink this wine.
Do as I say, and you'll be a free man.
Don't, and you'll never see Christendom again."

61

Count Ramón replied: "You eat, Don Ruy, eat and relax,
Because I'd rather die than break bread with you."
For three whole days he stayed stubborn.
They were dividing all the riches they'd won,
And he wouldn't eat, not even a single crumb.

62

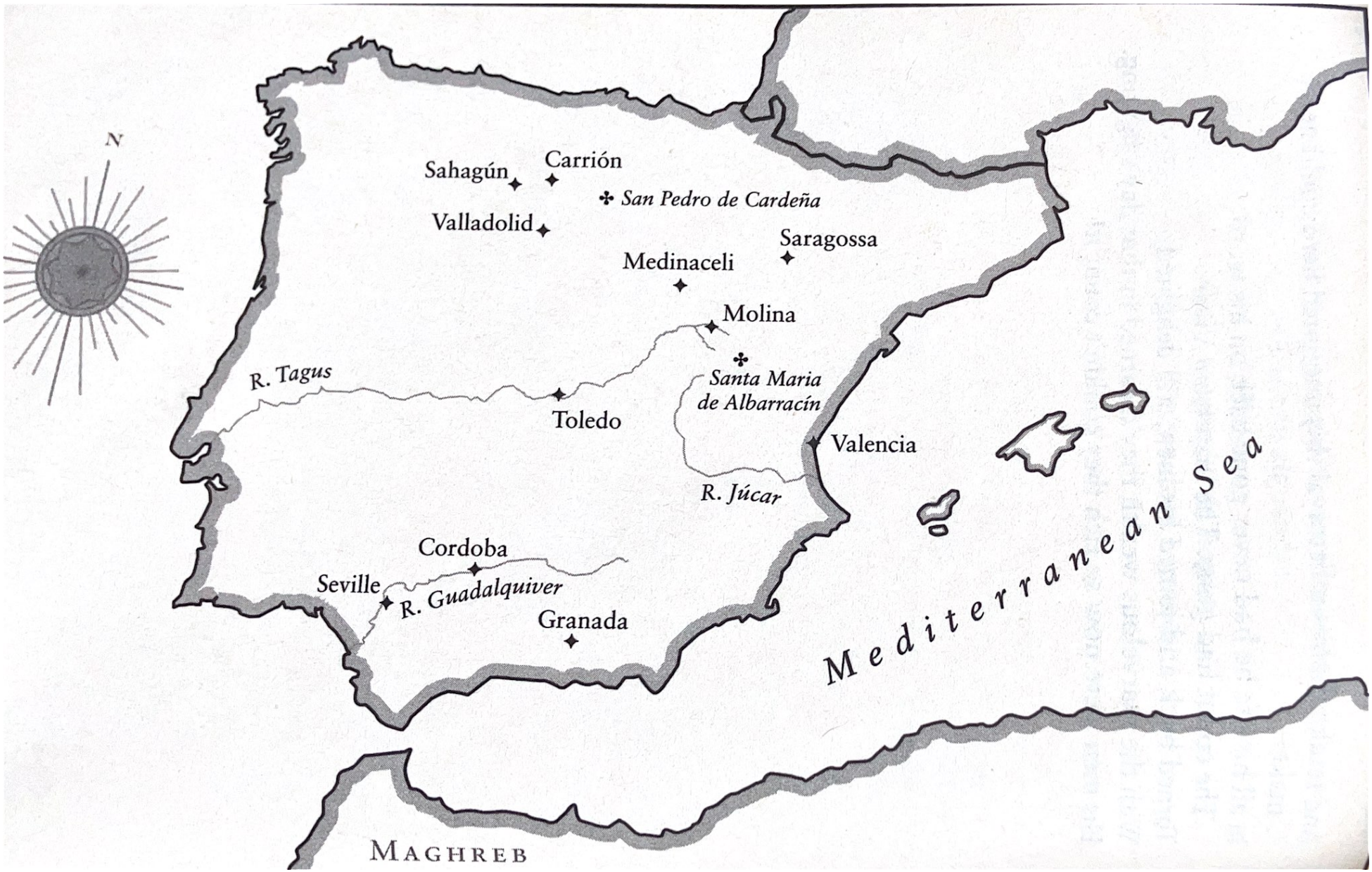
My Cid said: "Eat, Count. Take something,
Because unless you eat you'll never see another Christian,
And if you eat as I want you to,
You and two of your noblemen
Will be released, free to ride where you please."
Hearing these words, the count began to feel better:
"Cid, if you'll do what you say you will,
For the rest of my life I'll be bewildered."
"Then eat, Count, and when you've eaten your fill
You and the other two can go where you please.
But what you've lost, and what I've won in battle—
Hear me: I won't give back a wooden nickel,
Because I need it for these men of mine,
Who have, like me, no other way to find it.
We stay alive by taking from others, as we have with you.
And this will be our life for as long as God desires,

Living as men must, when their king has thrown them into exile."
The happy count asked for water, to wash his hands;
It was brought at once, as he had asked,
And he and the two noblemen, as my Cid had agreed,
Began to eat. And eat. And eat!
He who was born in just the right time sat next to him:
"Remember, Count: you need to eat freely—
Or else we'll have to sit here forever, and never leave."
The count replied: "O, I agree, I agree!"
He and his two noblemen fairly attacked their food,
And my Cid was pleased, seeing
For himself how quickly the count was wielding
His hands.
"At your pleasure, my Cid, we're ready to leave.
Have them bring our horses, and off we'll go.
In all my life as a count I've never eaten
Better. I'll never forget the delight of this meal."
They were given three palfreys, very well saddled,
And also fine clothes, fur-lined, and mantles.
Count Ramón rode between the two nobles,
With the exiled Castilian as their escort, beside them.
"So here you leave us, Count, and you ride
As a free Catalonian. I'm grateful for all you've left
Behind. If ever you feel the need to find me
Again, and revenge yourself, do let me know.
Or not: just come and find me,
And either I'll take something from you, or you from me."
"Ah, don't worry, my Cid, be at ease!
I've already paid you a year's assessment:
Returning for more is not my intention."

63

The count spurred his horse and rode right off,
But kept turning his head and looking behind him,
Afraid my Cid might change his mind

And retake them—a betrayal this untainted hero could never
make:
In all his life he had never gone back on his word.
The count had gone. The man from Vivar
Turned back and joined his men, still delighted
With the marvelous wealth they'd earned in that day's fighting.
His men were now so rich they couldn't count it!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